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Maine Song and Story Sampler

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1991

Bye-Bye Longjohns

Jim Cahill

Dot Ruppell

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Song: "Bye-Bye Longjohns"

Singer: Jim Cahill with piano accompaniment by Dot Ruppell

Town: Bingham, ME

NA 2245 CD 2172 Track 13

Collector: Jeff McKeen

Date: 1991

"**Bye-Bye Longjohns**" is a musical representation of how most Mainers feel by the time March rolls around. For some, this feeling comes even earlier. The song was written in western Maine over the course of the late twentieth century. The song began as one verse by the nephew of Grange member Myrtle McKinney, who was also the official musician in Norridgewock, ME. After singing the short song, Jim Cahill asked Dottie Abbott, a resident of The Forks and member of the Grange in Bingham, to write additional verses. The fact that the song has multiple authors likely explains the change in refrain from the first to second verses. Though even more verses may have been written since, the three verse song heard here was the full version as of 1991. Also note that the song follows the tune of "Bye-bye Blackbird."

The Patrons of Husbandry was founded by Oliver Hudson Kelly in 1867 as a secret society of agriculturists concerned with education, economic cooperation, political lobbying, and fraternal association. The first Grange in Maine was established in Hampden in 1873, and by 1887 the state had the largest Grange membership in the nation. The chief function of the Grange in Maine has always been social – to improve the quality of life for farm families. From the very beginning, music played a central role in Grange activities. Recent Grange musicians retained many older styles of music and traditional entertainment. From the "official" Grange piano music to songfests and harmonica tunes, the music of an earlier age is still heard in Grange halls throughout the state.

1.

I put them on October 1, that was orders from my hon,
How long, longjohns?
They'll keep me warm all winter long, I want to tell you in this song,
How long, longjohns?
They were closer to me than a friend, next year to Sears again I'll send;
I kind of miss this underwear, for several months we were a pair,
Longjohns, bye-bye!

2.

They got smelly towards the end, it was even hard to bend,
Bye-bye longjohns!
I bought red but they turned black, I should really take them back,
Bye-bye longjohns!
I must admit that I was glad to shed them, but for months they really warmed my aft end;
There were times I thought I'd freeze, especially when I felt a breeze,
Longjohns, bye-bye!

3.

I'd have shed my underwear, I don't care I'll go bare,
Bye-bye longjohns!
They were very close to me, they tickled me, tee hee hee,
Bye-bye longjohns!
If you see them you'll know where to find me, how I miss that old trap door behind me;
I have shed my underwear but I don't care I'll go bare,
Longjohns bye-bye!

Maine Folklife Center